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# Case of the Dissenting Ministers

By

Israel Mauduit

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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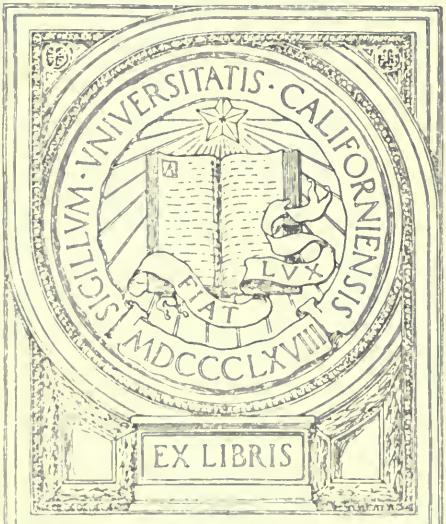

# THE CASE OF THE DISSENTING MINISTERS.

ADDRESSED TO THE

LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL.

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BY ISRAEL MAUDUIT.

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To which is added,

A COPY of the BILL propoſed for their Relief.

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THE FOURTH EDITION.

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## ADVERTISEMENT to the FIRST IMPRESSION.

THE following Caſe has been written and printed, without the Knowledge of any One of the Diſſenting Miniſters, concerned in the preſent Application to Parliament: The Author deſires therefore, if any Thing contained in it ſhould be judged improper, that the Blame may fall upon himſelf only, and not be imputed to the Prejudice of a Cauſe, which he wiſhes to ſerve; and which he thinks deſerving the Patronage of every Friend to Civil and Religious Liberty.

APR 26 1938

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THE

# CASE

OF THE

## DISSENTING MINISTERS, &c.

THE Reaſonableneſs of Toleration, has been ſo demonſtrably proved by Mr. *Locke*, that no Man, ſince the Publication of his Letters, has ventured to diſpute it.

THE Benefits of Toleration, this Nation, for more than fourſcore Years, has been experiencing.

AT the Revolution, that great Æra of Liberty and of Proteſtantiſm, one of the firſt Concerns of Parliament was to grant to all Proteſtants diſſenting from the Church of *England*, a Liberty of meet-

ing together for the Exercise of their own religious Worship.

In the Year 1689, when the Toleration Act was passed, the Dissenters were stricter Calvinists, and more zealous Adherents to the Doctrinal Parts of the Thirty-nine Articles, than many of the Established Clergy themselves were.

The Act of Toleration therefore, by excusing them from the Articles of Discipline, granted them Relief in all which they wanted; and, by directing that they should subscribe the rest, required no more of them than what they then believed.

From the Writings of Bishop *Taylor*, *Stillingfleet*, *Tillotson*, *Burnet*, *Hoadly*, *Clarke*, and the best Church of *England* Divines; from a more exact Study of the Holy Scriptures; and from the general Improvement in all Parts of Knowledge, which is naturally made in a Course of Years, many of the Dissenters now find their Opinions altered in some

of

of theſe Articles, which had not then been ſo carefully examined, and cannot ſubſcribe.

THEY do not take upon themſelves to judge of others: But, after diligently endeavouring to underſtand the Meaning of them, and ſeriouſly examining their own Hearts, they find that they cannot declare their ſolemn Aſſent and Conſent to them, conſiſtently with Sincerity and a good Conſcience.

HENCE it ariſes, that the Intention of the Toleration Act is fruſtrated: And, though at the Time of paſſing, it meant to give the Diſſenters a legal Right to the Exerciſe of divine Worſhip in their own Manner, and at that Time actually *did* give it them; yet now it does not. The Act is rendered ineffectual, and their Miniſters ſtand expoſed to the Penal Laws of *Charles* II. by the Toleration's being made to depend upon a Condition, which at that Time they could with Sincerity comply with, but which now they cannot.

In theſe their Scruples, whether they are right or wrong is not the Queſtion; but whether they are *criminally* wrong: Crimes only being the Object of Puniſhment.

No Man in this enlightened Age will ſay, that a Diſſenting Miniſter's merely Preaching to his People is a Crime, which merits Fining, Impriſoning, and Baniſhment; or that his adminiſtring the Sacrament merits an additional Fine of one Hundred Pounds; five and twenty of which are given as an Encouragement to the Informer.

No Man would wiſh to ſee theſe Severities put into Execution.

Is it not then a Diſgrace to our Statute-Book, to ſuffer Laws to ſtand there, which ought never to be executed?

In the two Reigns preceding the Revolution, the penal Laws were the chief Inſtruments

Inſtruments in the Hands of a popiſh King and popiſh Miniſters, to divide Proteſtants, and make them hate one another worſe than Papiſts: and the Severities of them were made Uſe of on Purpoſe to force the Diſſenters to petition for a general Toleration; and to prepare the Nation to receive ſuch a one, as ſhould include both Papiſts and Diſſenters.

Is it not then the moſt natural Method of expreſſing our Regard to *Proteſtant Chriſtianity*, to aboliſh thoſe ſevere Laws, which were made Uſe of by Papiſts on Purpoſe to deſtroy it?

MIGHT we not appeal to the ſpiritual Part of our Legiſlators, whether it be agreeable to the Precept of our great Maſter, to bind theſe grievous Burdens, and to retain theſe Terrors over others, which cannot poſſibly be of any Benefit to the eſtabliſhed Church, and which all Men would ſo heavily feel when laid upon themſelves?

Is it conſiſtent with the Spirit of Law-making, or did any wiſe Legiſlature ever alledge as an Argument for the continuing of a Law, that it is ſo very unreaſonable that there is no Danger of any one's putting it in Execution?

SHALL *then*, it may be aſked, *profligate and vicious Men be allowed to preach, and corrupt the Manners of the People?*

VICIOUS and profligate Men doubtleſs ought, if poſſible, to be kept out of every Church, but Subſcriptions will keep them out of none. What Hold can be had from Principle on Men, who are void of Principle? Or what Security in the Truth of Men, who deny or deſpiſe the ſacred Obligations of it? Make as many Articles as you will, *they* will ſubſcribe them all.

SHALL *then Deiſts or profane Scoffers be ſuffered to preach? and from the Pulpit undermine the Chriſtian Religion? deny*

*deny the Trinity? or revile the Service of our Liturgy?*

A DEIST *upon Principle* would never wiſh to be a Preacher of the Goſpel; and he that has no Principle will certainly go into the Church, where there is the moſt to be got by it.

As to the Doctrine of the Trinity, that is ſufficiently guarded by the 10th of King *William:* An Act, which needs no additional Severities to protect a Doctrine, concerning which good Men in all Ages have been of different Opinions, and which many great Divines of the Church of *England* have not thought to be of ſo much Importance. They, however, who think it of the moſt Importance, will find themſelves by that Act armed with all the neceſſary Powers for its Maintenance. Nor will any one, who reads the Act, find himſelf in the leaſt Degree more diſpoſed to impeach that Doctrine after the paſſing of this Bill, than he was before.

" An Incapacity for any Office eccle-
" ſiaſtic, civil, or military, in the firſt
" Inſtance, and an Inability to plead any
" Action at Law, to be a Guardian, or
" Executor, or Legatee, and the ſuffer-
" ing Impriſonment for three Years, in
" the ſecond Inſtance," are Terrors which are abundantly ſufficient for the Purpoſe, but which nothing ſhort of Infallibility can juſtify.

As to the Liturgy, that is abundantly ſecured by the 1ſt of *Elizabeth*, which ordains, that " If any Perſon ſhall in
" Plays, Songs, or Rimes, or *by other*
" *open Words* declare or ſpeak any thing
" in the derogation, depraving, or de-
" ſpiſing of the ſame Book, (of Common
" Prayer) or of any thing therein con-
" tained, or any Part thereof, he ſhall
" for the firſt Offence, forfeit a Hun-
" dred Marks, or ſuffer Six Months
" Impriſonment; for the ſecond, Four
" hundred Marks, or ſuffer Twelve
" Months Impriſonment; and for the
" third, ſhall forfeit all his Goods and
" Chattels,

" Chattels, and ſhall ſuffer Impriſonment " for Life."

BUT *ſhall Enthuſiaſts of all Sorts be ſuffered to get into Pulpits? Men who deſpiſe the written Word of God, and pretend to peculiar Inſpiration?*

IF any ſuch *ſhould* ariſe, in vain will human Laws oppoſe their Authority againſt Men, who think that they act under the divine: And human Prudence will judge it much wiſer to ſuffer wild Enthuſiaſm to vent itſelf in its own Way, and evaporate ſo much the ſooner.

BUT, in Fact, who are the reputed Enthuſiaſts of the preſent Times? the Enthuſiaſts, againſt whom many of our Biſhops have ſo earneſtly engaged? Are we not directed to ſeek for them among the Methodiſts? Men, that are ſprung out of the *Church*, and not from the *Diſſenters*; and Men, who, of all others, are the greateſt Zealots for the thirty-nine Articles?

SHOULD any diſtempered Imagination, or monaſtic Gloom, ſtill raiſe up to itſelf Spectres of I know not what Hereſies and Schiſms, and fancy that unknown and untried Evils are to ariſe out of this Exemption; even ſuch imaginary Terrors may well ſubſide, when it is conſidered, that the Diſſenters preaching without ſubſcribing is not a new Experiment to be made now; but is a Practice, which has already ſubſiſted for theſe forty or fifty Years paſt, and no evil Conſequences have ariſen from it: And ſurely their making the ſolemn Declaration, which is now propoſed, is at leaſt a better Security, than their making none at all.

WHATEVER Streſs the preſent Right Reverend Bench may lay on enforcing Subſcription upon Diſſenters, their learned Predeceſſors in King *William*'s Time did not judge it a Matter of quite ſo much Importance: for the Toleration Bill, as framed by the Biſhops and Judges in the Houſe of Lords, and ſent down to the other, did not enjoin it: and the Obliga-

Obligation to *ſubſcribe*, was inſerted by the Commons.

By the preſent Toleration Act, the Quakers are not required to ſubſcribe any one of the Articles of the Church of *England*. The Makers of that Act, therefore, could not have thought it criminal to doubt of any of the thirty-four doctrinal Articles, nor have thought it neceſſary to prevent from preaching Men, who did not ſubſcribe them. Even that ſingle Declaration, which the Quakers do make, had never been thought of by the Legiſlature, if they themſelves had not voluntarily offered it. *Quod imprudens Factum*, ſays Mr. *Locke* *, *multi inter illos, & Cordatiores, valde dolent*. If the Church was not injured, nor the Conſciences of Churchmen violated, by the allowing of one Set of Diſſenters to preach, without any Obligation to ſubſcribe the Articles; how then can either of theſe be affected, by



* Letter to *Limborch*, 6th *June*, 1689.

allowing the ſame Exemption to the others?

THE Toleration in *Scotland* requires no Subſcription to the Articles of the eſtabliſhed Church of *Scotland.*

BUT what is deciſive upon this Point is, that the Toleration in *Ireland* requires no Subſcription.

IF the Church has been ſafe in *Ireland*, ever ſince the 6th of *George* I. though the Diſſenters there do not ſubſcribe the Articles, may not the Church be juſt as ſafe in *England* as it is in *Ireland?*

IN ſhort, Men may ſearch for what diſtant Pretences they pleaſe; but the common Senſe of Mankind will ever be againſt the Law as it now ſtands. Is there any Man ſuch a Stranger to the Right of private Judgment, as to ſay, that the not being able to give a ſolemn Aſſent and Conſent to all and every one of the doctrinal Articles, is a Crime

merit-

meriting a poſitive Puniſhment from the State? Is there any Man ſuch a Stranger to the firſt Principles of Toleration, as to ſay, that a diſſenting Miniſter's preaching a Sermon in his own licenſed Place of Worſhip is a Crime deſerving the poſitive Puniſhment of the Magiſtrate? If then neither of theſe Things are Crimes in themſelves, can two innocent Actions put together make a criminal one? Yes: perhaps it may be replied, as the Law now ſtands, he ſhould not preach without having ſubſcribed. True, it does ſay ſo, and that is the very Evil we complain of: that the Law, not intentionally, but accidentally, makes an innocent Action criminal, and puniſhes it more ſeverely than Actions, which are really criminal: which is the very Evil, which the Toleration Act meant intentionally to redreſs, and which we now aſk to have actually redreſſed.

But *the Diſſenters*, we have been told, *are not the ſame now, that they were formerly*;

*formerly*; *for they have changed their Opinions.* The Diſſenters are not changed from their Predeceſſors, more than the Clergy of the Church of *England* are changed from theirs. But in Fact, both of them, by ſtudying the Scriptures more carefully, have found Reaſon to alter their Opinions as to many doctrinal Articles. The Clergy of the Church of *England* changed firſt, and many of the Diſſenters have ſince. See the Account which the learned Biſhop of *Winchester* gives of this Matter; who certainly was well acquainted with the State of the Engliſh Clergy*. "The Queſtion now before "us may ſoon be reſolved, by aſking, "Which is the beſt and ſecureſt Way of "knowing exactly, what the Doctrine "of any particular Church, ſuppoſe the "Church of *England*, delivered at the "Time of the Reformation. Whether "by conſulting the Writings of particu-"lar Divines many Years after that "Period, or from authentic Acts and "Decla-

* Hoadly's Sermon on contending for the Faith.

" Declarations made and recorded at the " very Time?——For this Inſtance is " very proper to clear up what I have " been ſaying; as it will prove to us, " beyond all Contradiction, that the Doc- " trine, even of a particular Church; and " a Doctine recorded and ſet down in as " accurate a Manner, as was thought " neceſſary *for the avoiding Diverſity of* " *Opinions*; that even ſuch a Doctrine " may, in fifty Years Time, come to un- " dergo ſome Alterations; and in a few " Years more, to be entirely changed, in " the Writings and Diſcourſes of moſt of " the Members of the ſame Church. I " mean particularly the Points of Doc- " trine, called the Five Points, relating " to Juſtification, and God's Decrees, " and the like: Which were at firſt " eſteemed as Fundamental, and even " Eſſential to the Church of *Chriſt*, as " any others can be; and yet have been " at length much changed by gradual " Alterations." Have the Diſſenters made any greater Change in their Opinions, than what this wiſe Biſhop tells us has been made by the Clergy? or do either

either of us merit Fine and Impriſonment for our underſtanding the holy Scripture better than our Forefathers? If under the preſent State of the Law the pious Biſhop of *Wincheſter* did not think proper to reprehend his Clergy for ſubſcribing the ſame Articles, though he knew that their Faith was *changed*; ſurely his Succeſſors will not hold us puniſhable, who do not ſubſcribe the Articles, becauſe our Faith is not the *ſame?*

But it has been ſaid, *If we grant the Diſſenters this, they may aſk for ſomething more**.

If this Meaſure be wrong, there muſt be ſome good Reaſon to be urged againſt it: but if inſtead of aſſigning any, we only allege, that it may lead to ſomething elſe which is wrong; is not that Allegation a tacit Acknowledgment, that *this* Requeſt, at leaſt, is not unreaſonable? And is not the granting that which is reaſonable, the beſt Preparative for,

* The Repeal of the Teſt-Act.

for, and the moſt ſolid Juſtification of our refuſing that which is unreaſonable?

CAN it be expected that other Men will give themſelves the Trouble of preciſely marking out the Diſtinction between reaſonable and unreaſonable Requeſts; when thoſe, who are the beſt able, decline it, and chooſe to give an indiſcriminate Refuſal to them both?

NOT to add, that the exempting of their Preachers from Penalties, and the entitling of their Laity to Honours, are very different Things.

Is *then this Application particularly neceſſary at this Time? Or do any incline to put the Laws in Force againſt them?*

No, they do not. But that is the very Reaſon which makes this the proper Time for them to apply for Relief. Such is the unhappy Situation of the Diſſenters, that, as the Law now ſtands, Men always have it in their *Power* to perſecute them: they have an entire Confi-

dence in the Lenity and Wiſdom of Government, that they have not the *Will* to do it; and it is this favourable Diſpoſition, which makes the preſent the only proper Seaſon to aſk to be ſecured againſt future Danger. Should there ariſe another Race of civil or eccleſiaſtical Governors, who ſhould have the *Will* to perſecute them, it would be to little Purpoſe for the Diſſenters to aſk of *them* to give up the *Power* to do it. They believe that every Lord of Parliament is convinced of the Equity and of the Benefit of Toleration: They thankfully acknowledge the Felicity of the Age, and are ſatisfied that no Part of the Legiſlature would deſire to ſee theſe ſevere Laws put in Force againſt them: They are ſure that no Lord of Parliament is ſo far diveſted of Humanity, as to become *himſelf* their Perſecutor: They believe that none would wiſh to ſee any one elſe perſecute them; and it is that very Perſuaſion which makes them now apply to the Equity of the Houſe, and beg that their Lordſhips would not leave it

in the *Power* of any one elſe to perſecute them. 'Tis from Friends only they can aſk for Security; they well know that they muſt not hope for it from their Enemies.

THERE may be Bigots ſtill left in the Kingdom, who may ſecretly wiſh for an Opportunity to put theſe Penalties in Force: But even ſuch Men know that the Principles of Perſecution in this enlightened Age, are ſo extremely odious, that they dare not openly avow them. Such Men, therefore, at preſent, will only ſay, "*What need* of altering the Law, ſince we don't intend to make Uſe of it?" This was the Language of narrow Minds at the Time of paſſing the Toleration Act. *Some propoſed*, ſays Biſhop *Burnet* *, *that the Act ſhould be only temporary*; *as a neceſſary Reſtraint upon the Diſſenters: That they might demean themſelves ſo as to merit the Continuance of it, when the Term of Years now*



* Hiſt. Vol. ii, p. 10.

*offered might be expired. But this was rejected: There was now an univerſal Inclination to paſs the Act*; *whereas there might not be the ſame good Diſpoſition at another Time.* That Houſe of Lords was too wiſe and generous to adopt any of the Pretences for Perſecution. We have lived to ſee the Wiſdom of it: And muſt have experienced the Benefits of Toleration for ſo many Years ſince to very little Purpoſe, if in this more enlightened Age *our* Sentiments are not as liberal as *theirs*, and if the *preſent* Houſe of Lords is not at leaſt as generous as *that* was.

This Plea of Non-Intention to execute them, is not a new Argument, but has been the Pretence for the continuing of all penal Laws. It does not indeed give us the moſt favourable Opinion of this Argument to conſider, that it operates in juſt the contrary Way to all other Reaſonings. The *direct* Rule of civil Politicks is: the more abſurd the Law, the more Reaſon for repealing it. But

the

the Rule of eccleſiaſtic Politics runs *inverſly*; the more abſurd the Law, the leſs Reaſon for repealing it. The moſt cruel and abſurd of all penal Laws, was the Writ *de Hæretico comburendo*. The *Marian* Perſecution and Biſhop *Bonner*'s Fires had put it out of Countenance, and the Argument of Non-Intention in that Caſe was ſtrongeſt of all. It is not neceſſary to ſay how it was uſed in the Year 1677, when that Writ was taken away. In the preſent Application, which is only for taking away the Writ *de Hæretico impriſonando*, this Argument is not quite ſo ſtrong. The Diſſenters for their own Sakes don't wiſh to weaken it.

BUT the Statute which came the neareſt to that for Burning them, was the 35th of *Elizabeth:* by which the Puritans were condemned to abjure the Realm; and, if they returned, to ſuffer Death. In the Year 1681, when the Eyes of the Nation were open'd, and it was ſeen that the Deſign of the Court

Court was to bring in Popery, under the Cover of executing the penal Laws againſt the Diſſenters, a Motion was made in the Houſe of Commons for the Repeal of this very ſevere Act. The Bill paſt eaſily there: But, ſays Biſhop *Burnet*, "It went heavily in the Houſe of "Lords; for many of the Biſhops, tho' "they were not for putting that Law in "Execution, which had never been "done, but in one ſingle Inſtance; yet "they thought the Terror of it was of "ſome Uſe; and that the repealing it "might make the Party more inſolent. "On the Day of the Prorogation, the "Bill ought to have been offered to "the King; but the Clerk of the "Crown, by the King's particular "Order, withdrew the Bill. The King "had no Mind openly to deny it; but "he had leſs Mind to paſs it."

In the Morning, before they were prorogued, "two Votes were carried "in the Houſe of a very extraordinary "Nature: the one was, that the Laws

"made

" made againſt Recuſants ought not to " be executed againſt any but thoſe of " the Church of *Rome*. That was in- " deed the primary Intention of the " Law: yet all Perſons who came not " to Church, and did not receive the " Sacrament once a Year, were within " the Letter of the Law. The other " Vote was, that it was the Opinion " of that Houſe, that the Laws againſt " Diſſenters ought not to be executed *." Yet how much ſoever the Nation was then alarmed with the Danger of Popery, and how averſe ſoever to Severities againſt Diſſenters, no ſooner had the King diſſolved his *Oxford* Parliament, but Addreſſes came up to Court from all Parts of the Kingdom; " ſome of which reflected " ſeverely on the Non-Conformiſts; and " thanked the King for his not repealing " that Act of the 35th of *Elizabeth*, which " they prayed might be put in Execu- " tion †." Whatever generous Sentiments for

* *Burnet*'s Hiſt. Vol. i. Fol. 494.

† Ibid. Fol. 500.

for Liberty of Conſcience may at preſent prevail, have not the Diſſenters juſt Reaſon to be apprehenſive, that the Tide of popular Opinion may not run always the ſame Way?

BUT *why could not they have kept their own Council, and not have diſcovered this their weak Side to the World?*

THEY *have* kept their own Council for fifty Years together, and few Secrets relating to large Bodies of Men have been kept longer.

THEY were now called to this Application by the Voice of the Publick, and muſt have been ſtrangely wanting to their own Safety to have neglected it.

WITHOUT their *Knowledge*, but not without their *Thanks*, their Caſe was publiſhed *, and brought under the immediate

* By the learned and very ingenious Dean of *Gloucester*.

mediate View of the Legiſlature. In the Houſe of Commons many Gentlemen on both Sides of the Queſtion then before them, voluntarily declared their Senſe of the Hardſhip laid upon the Diſſenters, in being obliged to ſubſcribe the Articles of the Church, to which they did not belong, and in which they did not ſeek Promotion: and ſignified their Readineſs to conſent to a Bill for their Relief. Could they refuſe to liſten to ſuch an Invitation?

THE Event has proved that they judged rightly of the Occaſion, that that was the real Senſe of the Houſe, and that *one* Part at leaſt of Government was not againſt them: but nine Members having on any Day been to be found to vote againſt this Bill.

Now therefore ſince this publick Notice, their Toleration ſtands upon tenderer Ground than it did before: Their Danger is increaſed by its Notoriety, and they are put under the Neceſſity of flying to the Juſtice of Parliament for Safety.

THEY are now compelled to say *aloud*, what before they always said to *themselves*: that, as innocent Subjects, they have a Right to owe their Security to the Protection of the *Laws* of their Country, and not merely to the Favour of its *Governors*.

AND though they thankfully acknowledge, that hitherto they have been sheltered from Prosecutions by the Favour of Government, yet, that is a Screen, which is now seen through, and may not hereafter prove sufficient for their Protection.

SHOULD evil minded Persons take up the Trade of informing against them, what is it, which can be expected?

MEN may wish, as much as they please, that the Dissenters would subscribe the Articles; and they may condemn their Ministers, as much as they please, for not subscribing; but is there any Lord, Temporal or Spiritual, who will say, that

that he wiſhes to revive the Severities of the *Bartholomew-day*, 1662; when two thouſand diſſenting Miniſters were turned out of their Livings? If no one will avow this, what good End then can be anſwered, by letting looſe Informers upon them, and running the Riſk of creating Uneaſineſs in every County in the Kingdom? merely for the ſake of forcing the Articles of the Church upon Men, who do not belong to the Church, and who therefore have nothing to do with them?

THEY who are leſs affected by religious Conſiderations, may perhaps be more diſpoſed to attend to the Subject, when conſidered in a political Light. Whatever we may think of the preſent Times, there may come a Prince, and a Set of Miniſters, Laymen or Eccleſiaſtics, who may form a Deſign to enſlave us. Should ſuch an evil Day come, is there any one Thing, which they would more deſire, or which would be a greater Furtherance in the Execution of their

Deſign, than their having large Bodies of Men all over the Kingdom, obnoxious to penal Laws, and ſubject to their Mercy? Would any good *Engliſhman* then wiſh to leave it in the Power of ſome future bad Miniſter, to be able to intimate to the diſſenting Teacher in any Borough in the Kingdom, Sir, give your Vote for my Candidate, and uſe your Intereſt for him with your People in the Corporation Town where you preach, or expect to be baniſhed out of it, and to be ſent to the County Jail, if ever you come within five Miles of it.

BUT *this*, it has been ſaid, *is a new Attack upon the Church, added to ſeveral others made in the ſame* Seſſion.

THE taking innocent Men out of the Reach of Informers, and delivering them from a Liableneſs to Fines and Impriſonment, an Attack upon the Church?

DOES the Church then live by the Power of perſecuting other Men, that do

do not belong to it? or can the rendering innocent Men unhappy tend to its Edification?

Do Men wiſh to retain the Power of perſecuting as a *Support* to the Church? or as an *Ornament* to the Church? They cannot ſurely pay it a worſe Compliment than to ſuppoſe either.

Is our holy Religion the ſafer, or are Churchmen the happier for their having a Power of harraſſing Diſſenters? Far be it from me to ſuppoſe, that the Members of any Chriſtian Church ſhould wiſh to indulge ſo unchriſtian a Pleaſure, as that of holding other Men at their Mercy. But if there ſhould be any ſuch unhappy Diſpoſition, it is ſurely fit that innocent Men ſhould be put out of the Reach of it.

BUT *we cannot in Conſcience aſſent to this*, has been the Language of ſome.

THE Judgment of Conſcience doubtleſs is ſacred, and every Man is bound

to

to obey it: but if Conſcience will not permit our Legiſlators to allow the free Liberty of preaching to Men, who make the ſolemn Declaration in this Bill, will not Conſcience much more oblige them not to leave this Liberty of preaching to Men, who make no Declaration at all? So far therefore as Conſcience is concerned in retaining the Obligation to ſubſcribe, Conſcience muſt be concerned in enforcing it: and if the Plea of Conſcience be brought for keeping up this Sword of Juſtice ſtill hanging over their Heads, ſurely the Diſſenters have juſt Cauſe to tremble, leſt the ſame Plea of Conſcience may be hereafter urged for the letting it fall on them. The beſt Argument, which the Oppoſers of this Bill have hitherto offered for the Continuance of the Law in its preſent State, is, that they never intend to make Uſe of it: but the Plea of Conſcience ſupercedes all theſe merciful Diſpoſitions. And when the retaining of this Law is conſidered as the Cauſe of God, which it muſt be to make it a Matter of

Con-

Conſcience, the exerting it may but too eaſily come to be thought doing him good Service. Charity itſelf therefore muſt dictate to every lay Lord the Amendment of the preſent Law, in order to preſerve the Conſciences of Churchmen from being entangled in the Execution of it.

BUT, we have been told, *a Heathen, a Deiſt, or even a Mahometan, might ſubſcribe the Declaration in this Bill.* The Declaration propoſed is in the following Form: *I* A. B. *declare, as in the Preſence of Almighty God, that I believe that the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament contain a Revelation of the Mind and Will of God, and that I receive them as the Rule of my Faith and Practice.* Whatever may be the Language of Ignorance, the Diſſenters hope that their Chriſtianity will not be queſtioned by thoſe, who ſhould better underſtand the ſolemn Nature of this Declaration, and the expreſs determinate Import of theſe Words. If it ſhould be, all which

they

they have to reply is, they hope that they ſhall ever tremble at the Thought of committing ſo groſs an Act of Inſincerity and Impiety. Will a Mahometan renounce his Coran, and ſay that he receives the New Teſtament *for the Rule of his Faith and Practice?*

If they had been capable of ſuch Prevarication in the Sight of Almighty God, they needed not to have come to Parliament to be relieved from Subſcription.

But in as much as ſuch uncharitable Suppoſitions have been made, they beg Leave now to add, as the uniform and avowed Principle of the Diſſenters, that, as they believe the holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, ſo they receive them with that ſupreme Reverence, which is due to them *as* the Word of God, and which is due to no other Writing *but* the Word of God. That they hold it their Duty to believe all which they find in the Word of God, and that no Man is bound to believe,

and

and much leſs has any Right to compel them to profeſs they believe any Thing, which they do not find to be contained in the Word of God. That they willingly read any human Compoſition profeſſing to help them to the Underſtanding of the Word of God; but that they receive no human Compoſition as an authoritative Interpretation of Scripture; becauſe that is an exalting of that human Compoſition *above* the Word of God: it is the making the Compoſition of Man the Teſt of the Word of God, whereas they have ever learned to make the Word of God the Teſt of every human Compoſition. They believe that the holy Scriptures are the only and the ſufficient Rule of Faith and Practice, and can ſubmit to the Authority of no human Deciſions as a ſupplemental Amendment to them. They believe the holy Scriptures to contain the Whole of that Revelation, which God has been pleaſed to make to us, and dare not acknowledge any ſuch Defects in that Revelation, as to need the Aſſiſtance of human Wiſdom to ſupply them. They

ſee that all the *Works* of God are perfect in their ſeveral Kinds, and they believe that God never gave his *Word* for Man to mend.

THESE have been the unvaried Sentiments of the Diſſenters, and they are confirmed in them by the concurrent Senſe of the greateſt Writers of the Church of *England*, from the Reformation to this Day. At the Time, when the *Engliſh* Government, and other proteſtant States, ſeparated themſelves from the Church of *Rome*, the authoritative Interpretations of Scripture, and the Deciſions of the Church, were all againſt them. *They* were then the Schiſmatics and the Heretics. The firſt Reformers therefore all appealed from theſe Deciſions to the Scriptures themſelves, and acknowledged *them* as the only Rule of Faith. " By the Religion of Pro-
" teſtants, (ſays the great *Chillingworth*)
" I do not underſtand the Doctrine of
" *Luther*, of *Calvin*, or *Melancton*, or
" the Confeſſion of *Auguſta* or *Geneva*,
" nor the Catechiſm of *Heidelberg*, nor
" the

" the Articles of the Church of *England*;
" but that, wherein they all agree, and
" which they all ſubſcribe, as a perfect
" Rule of their Faith and Actions, that
" is the *Bible*, the *Bible*, the *Bible*, I
" ſay, the *Bible* only is the Religion of
" Proteſtants—In a Word, there is no
" ſufficient Certainty, but of Scripture
" only, for any conſidering Man to
" build upon. This therefore, and this
" only, I have Reaſon to believe: this
" I will profeſs: according to this I
" will live, and for this, if there be
" Occaſion, I will not only willingly,
" but even gladly loſe my Life; though
" I ſhould be ſorry that Chriſtians ſhould
" take it from me. Propoſe me any
" Thing out of this Book, and require
" whether I believe or no, and, ſeem
" it never ſo incomprehenſible to human
" Reaſon, I will ſubſcribe it with Hand
" and Heart, as knowing, no Demon-
" ſtration can be ſtronger than this:
" God hath ſaid ſo, therefore it is true.
" In other Things, I will take no Man's
" Liberty of Judgment from him, nei-
" ther ſhall any Man take mine from

" me. I will think no Man the worſe
" Man, nor the worſe Chriſtian: I will
" love no Man the leſs for differing in
" Opinion from me; and what Mea-
" ſure I mete to others, I expect from
" them again. I am fully aſſured, that
" God does not, and therefore that Men
" ought not, to require any more of
" any Man than this, to believe the
" Scriptures to be God's Word, to en-
" deavour to find the true Senſe of it,
" and to live according to it."

THE pious and very learned Biſhop of *Winchester*'s Sermon on contending for the Faith is wholly employed upon this Argument.

" THERE are ſome Chriſtians, (ſays
" he) and a very numerous Body of
" Men they are, who know no other
" Guide but the living Guide of the
" preſent Church, and acknowledge no
" other Faith for *the Faith once delivered*
" *to the Saints* about ſeventeen hundred
" Years ago, but that which is now de-
" livered to them by their preſent Rulers

" as

" as ſuch. The greater Part of theſe " take a very ſhort Method of eſtabliſh- " ing this Point, and that is, by laying " down the Infallibility of the preſent " Church.

" But this is a Point ſo groſs, and ſo " utterly void of all Proof, that a great " Body of the Chriſtian World have " broke looſe from the Power of this " Monſter. And, in Order to this, they " had no other Way, but to declare for " the New Teſtament itſelf, as the only " Guide, or Rule of Faith; the only " Deliverer of this Faith to us of later " Ages. And this is the very Rule, I " have now laid down. But when this " comes to be put in Practice; too many " of the ſame Perſons, who have ſet it " up as the only Guide, turn round on " a ſudden, and let us know that they " mean by it, not thoſe ſacred original " Writings themſelves, but the Inter- " pretations, or Senſe put upon them " by our ſpiritual Superiors: To which " we are ſometimes ſaid to be obliged, " and bound in Duty to ſubmit; and

" ſome-

" ſometimes are allowed a Liberty of
" Examination: But in effect, put under
" an Obligation to find that to be Truth,
" which is taught by theſe Leaders.

" BUT ought we not to pay a Regard
" to thoſe whoſe Buſineſs it is to find out
" the Truth, and to diſpenſe it to us?
" Yes undoubtedly: The Regard of ſeri-
" ous Attention, and the Reſpect of a due
" Examination; but not the Submiſſion
" due only to Infallibility. Shall we
" not ſubmit our low Underſtandings to
" the higher Underſtandings of others?
" Or ſhall we pretend to oppoſe our
" Judgements to thoſe of our Superiors?
" Let theſe, and the like Queſtions be
" aſked concerning the chriſtian Laity in
" all the popiſh Countries; and thoſe
" of our Church will unanimouſly an-
" ſwer, No: The Rule is quite other-
" wiſe. Nay with regard to the Refor-
" mation, it has been long ago with one
" Conſent ſaid, that it was a glorious
" Thing not to ſubmit to the Voice of
" any Men, but to reſerve that Regard for
" *God* and for *Chriſt* in matters of Faith.

" I CAN-

" I CANNOT but obſerve, that, in order " to preſerve this Faith, delivered in thoſe " antient Books, entire; the moſt ſecure, " as well as the moſt chriſtian Way, is " to preſerve the old Words, and the old " Language, of thoſe Books, as unvaried " and unchanged as poſſible. The Rea- " ſon is plain, becauſe they are the " Words, in which it pleaſed *God* it " ſhould at firſt be delivered. And there- " fore, though many Perſons may miſ- " take in their different Apprehenſions " concerning the Senſe of theſe Words; " yet we may be ſure, whilſt we retain " theſe Words, that we retain what *God* " himſelf has ſeen fit ſhould be delivered " and tranſmitted to us, as the beſt Con- " veyance, all Things conſidered, of the " Faith required of us.

" I AM ſenſible it is ſaid, *that Hereſies* " *aroſe*, i. e. that ſome Men differed " from others, in their Notions founded " upon theſe Words: And therefore, it " was thought neceſſary to change the " Language, in which this Faith was " delivered to us. But did not *Almighty* " *God*

" *God* foreſee this great Evil of Difference
" of Opinion, in the Points in which
" Men have ſince differed? He did:
" And yet he left our Faith delivered in
" thoſe Words, which are ſaid to have
" been the Foundation of thoſe Diffe-
" rences. Or, are we wiſer than *God*, in
" chuſing more effectual Words to this
" Purpoſe, than thoſe in which the
" Perſons commiſſioned by him delivered
" his Will? Who will ſay this? Or did
" he appoint, that in After-ages the
" antient Language ſhould be totally
" changed, for a new Syſtem of Words;
" and that the Faith of Chriſtians ſhould
" be delivered over again in Novel Ex-
" preſſions? If he did, let a plain Text
" be produced; and not ſuch a conſe-
" quential Argument, of the Uſefulneſs
" or Fitneſs of it, as may be urged,
" even for the Popiſh Infallibility itſelf.

" BUT when new Language has,
" by the help of ſuch an Argument,
" been introduced; what has been the
" Effect? Good and honeſt Men *alone*
" have

" have been the Sufferers. Theſe have
" been cramped and diſturbed, and, per-
" haps, deprived of all worldly Privi-
" leges by it. The diſhoneſt, and un-
" thinking, and ſlaviſh Minds have
" always rejoiced in ſuch an earthly
" Peculium, as this Method ſecures to
" them. And, if we conſult Experience,
" the new Words invented for the Secu-
" rity of the Faith, with regard both to
" learned and unlearned, have been gene-
" rally ſuch as have increaſed, and not
" diminiſhed Hereſies and Schiſms: hard
" Terms, metaphyſical and abſtruſe
" Expreſſions, ambiguous themſelves,
" though introduced under pretence of
" avoiding Ambiguity; utterly unintel-
" ligible to the Unlearned, who yet are
" to be ſaved by Faith as well as others;
" and eternally debated amongſt the
" Learned. And thus it will always
" be, when Men become wiſer in their
" own Conceit to prevent Evils, than
" *God* himſelf."

THESE are the Sentiments of one of the greateſt Writers of the Church of Eng-

land: And we believe that no greater Writer of his Order will arise to contradict them. One of the greatest of them, to his Honour, has, in his *Writings* at least, declared for as liberal a Toleration, as Bishop *Hoadly* himself has.

UNDER these Authorities may not the Dissenters make their Appeal to Heathens, Deists, and Mahometans, to whom they have on this Occasion been so very injuriously compared, and ask even of *them* to judge, Whether, as Christians, they can in any better Manner prove their Reverence to *Christ*, their great Master and Lawgiver, than by acknowledging no other Authority but his? Or better express their Belief of his Gospel, than *by receiving it as the Revelation of the Mind and Will of God, and as the Rule of their Faith and Practice*, and by admitting of no human Additions to be made to it?

BUT whatever may be the Practice of others, upon which they do not presume to judge,

judge, theſe are the Principles, to which, as Chriſtians and as Proteſtants, they think themſelves bound to adhere. And they humbly hope that none of the Servants of *Chriſt*, their common Lord and Maſter, whoſe Coming to publiſh his Goſpel was announced by the Declaration of Peace and Good Will to Mankind, and at whoſe ſecond Coming we muſt all account for the Uſes we have made of it; they hope that no Proteſtant Profeſſor of the Goſpel of Peace will think, that that Goſpel can be a Warrant for their obliging other Chriſtians, not belonging to their Church, to violate their Conſciences by ſubſcribing to human Articles of Faith, which they do not ſee to be contained in the Word of *God*, or for their holding them ſubject to Fines and Impriſonments, if they do not.

But what are the Diſſenters? and what have been their Doings, that they ſhould ſo often hear themſelves treated as Deiſts, or as Enthuſiaſts? Their Predeceſſors of the laſt Century all ſubſcribed

the Articles, and are therefore beyond Exception. And as to thoſe of the preſent, let the Writings of the late Lord Barrington and of Sir Richard Ellis; let the Commentaries of a Pierce, a Benſon, a Doddrige, a Lowman, and a Taylor, upon the different Parts of the New Teſtament; let the numerous Sermons printed by others; let the learned labours of a Jones or a Lardner, the manly Devotions of a Grove or a Watts, the comprehenſive Views of a Prieſtley, the judicious Writings of a Farmer or a Bourn, the Works of an Amory, a Price, or a Furneaux, with other Members even of the preſent Committee; let theſe all teſtify, whether the Diſſenters are not capable of ſpeaking the Words of *Truth and Soberneſs* as well as other Men.

And upon what Ground are they to be charged with Deiſm? The Number of Diſſenting Miniſters may not perhaps amount to more than a Tenth Part of the Clergy of the Church of *England*. Nor have we at our private Academies the

the Advantage of ſuch Libraries, as are to be found at the two public Univerſities: Yet, as often as our common Faith has been attacked, the Diſſenters have taken their full Share in the Defence of it. When Mr. *Collins* attempted to undermine the *Grounds and Reaſons* of our Faith, the various Anſwers written by Diſſenters did not diſcover any Want of Zeal for our holy Religion. And when Chandler the Biſhop wrote his Letter of Thanks to Chandler the Preſbyter, for his learned Defence of it, *he* ſurely would not have wiſhed that his fellow Labourer in the common Cauſe, ſhould have all his Lifetime remained ſubject to Impriſonment for preaching a Sermon, and enforcing the Duties of that Goſpel, the Truth of which he had ſo ably maintained.

AFTER this, when our Religion was again attacked by Mr. *Tyndal* in his *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, the Diſſenters were again as ready to appear in its Vindication. We willingly acknowlege

knowlege the Merit of all: but may we not without being chargeable with Preſumption, aſk, whoſe Anſwers were more read, or better approved, than thoſe of Mr. *Simon Brown* and of Dr. *Foſter?*

When Mr. *Pope* ſaid of this latter,

Let humble *Foſter*, if he will, excell
Ten *Metropolitans* in preaching well,

We know how to aſcribe One-half of this to his Hatred of *Engliſh* Biſhops, and to give a great Part of the reſt to the Warmth of his new-made Friendſhip. But ſhall Proteſtant Divines wiſh the Continuance of a Law, by which this great Defender of Chriſtianity was liable at any Time to be ſent to Jail, whom Papiſts themſelves have treated thus reſpectfully!

I MENTION not the impudent Attack of *Woolſton*, nor the more ſubtle one made by the Author of *Chriſtianity not founded in Argument:* In anſwering which, *Benſon* and *Lardner* again diſtinguiſhed

guiſhed themſelves. But let it not be told in the foreign Languages, into which the Works of Dr. *Lardner* have been tranſlated, that the learned Author of the Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory, was by the Laws of *England* held all his Lifetime ſubject to Fines and Impriſonment: and that, though the late Archbiſhop, in the moſt friendly Correſpondence, frequently acknowleged his Merits, yet his Succeſſors all wiſh to maintain the Force of a Law, by which he might at any Time have been ſent to Newgate.

When the Works of Lord *Bolingbroke*, that great Apoſtate from all the Principles of his Education as a Diſſenter, a Proteſtant, and a Chriſtian, were publiſhed after his Death; what Divine is there in this Kingdom, who will ſtand forth and ſay, that the Work of Dr. *Leland* would not have done him Honour? But *Leland*, though a Proteſtant Diſſenter, was happily removed out of the Reach of Penal Laws, to which others

are

are ſubjected. So too was *Duchal* in the latter Part of his Life, and ſo was *Abernethy*, whoſe Sermons having been preached in *Ireland*, gained him Honour and general Eſteem only, without the Danger of Impriſonment.

UNDER an Accuſation of ſo reproachful a Nature as that of Deiſm, the Diſſenters hope, that they may appeal to their Writings, without incurring the Charge of Vanity or Preſumption. They wiſh not to compare themſelves with the Numbers of great Men in the Eſtabliſhment: but what is there to be found in the Works of theſe their departed Friends, or what was there in their Conduct, which could afford any the leaſt Ground to bring their Chriſtianity into Queſtion? Some of theſe ſpent long laborious Lives in the Defence of our holy Religion *. The reſt were employed in preaching the Duties of it to their ſeveral Hearers; and

* Dr. Lardner was Writing to near his Eightieth Year.

all

all of theſe we truſt lived and died in the Faith of *Chriſt*, though they would never ſubſcribe their Aſſent to any thing but *his Goſpel.*

When we heard well-meaning High Church Country Gentlemen ſet us forth as wild Enthuſiaſts, and Fifth-monarchy Men; when People that died a hundred Years ago, Anceſtors of we know not whom, were raiſed to Light again, to ſit for *our* Pictures, and we were drawn with all the Attributes of Fanaticiſm; we thought the Painter injudicious in going ſo far out of the way to make his Picture unlike; but felt no Diſpoſition to be offended at the meer Effect of the narrow Prejudices of Education, and a profound Ignorance of every Thing relating to us. But when Men of Reading, who pretend to know ſomething of us, when Divines, who from their Station ſhould be Examples of Chriſtian Charity, when theſe have given Indulgence to the moſt injurious Reflections; we have then ſurely a Right to maintain

our Integrity; and to appeal to the more impartial Judgment of the Public, to determine whether our Writings have been ſuch, as to mark us with the Character of Deiſts, or to ſet us ſo much below the common Standard of Mankind.

But whatever may be the Defects of our Miniſters, or how far ſoever they may fall ſhort of other great Divines in their Learning or their Preaching, in their Faith or in their Lives, Fines and Impriſonments are not the natural Means to make them wiſer. Nor are theſe ſurely the proper Powers, which Gentlemen and Scholars, valuing themſelves upon a liberal Education, would wiſh to retain over ſuch as happen to differ from them; or fit Puniſhments, to which they can think, that other Gentlemen of a liberal Education ought to be ſubjected. Leaſt of all are they the *Chriſtian* Means of Conviction, or expreſſive of that *Spirit of Meekneſs*, which the Goſpel preſcribes, as the Method of inſtructing and reclaiming thoſe that be in Error.

UPON the whole, Men fond of Power over others, may weave as many political or theological Cobwebs as they pleaſe; but Truth and Right will eaſily paſs through them all. Party Rage and a ſudden Frenzy of the Times may practiſe it; but the cool Senſe of Mankind will never warrant, the committing a Chriſtian Divine to Jail for preaching a Chriſtian Sermon. If no Man's calm Reaſon will juſtify the Practice, then what can be the Ground of retaining a Law for it? A Law, which originally was a Law of Tyrants; founded only on Revenge, and tending only to Oppreſſion? a Law, which being directly contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity, and originally made uſe of for the Deſtruction of Proteſtantiſm, muſt be a Diſgrace to the Church inſtead of a Support to it, and what every good Churchman therefore ought to wiſh to ſee removed.

# POSTSCRIPT.

A Very miſtaken Repreſentation of the Proceedings of the Diſſenting Miniſters upon this Affair, makes it neceſſary to relate the following Particulars.

IMMEDIATELY after the Debate in the Houſe of Commons upon the Petition of the Clergy of the Church of *England*, ſome of the Diſſenting Miniſters, who heard that Debate, conſulted with others of their Brethren, whether they ought not to take the Benefit of the preſent Diſpoſition of the Houſe, and petition for that Relief, which they had ſo long deſired, and had been waiting for a proper Opportunity to obtain.

IN theſe Conſultations it ſoon occurred, that there was not Time to take the Aſſiſtance of their Brethren in the Country, and make it ſo general a Concern as they wiſhed it to be, before the laſt Day of receiving Petitions would be over.

over. They therefore laid aſide the Thought of applying during the preſent Seſſion: but reſolved to call a Meeting of the Diſſenting Miniſters in and about *London*, to take their Opinion on preparing a Petition for the next Seſſion: And agreed that, Summons's ſhould accordingly be iſſued for the following *Thurſday*.

In this Interval, ſome others of the *London* Miniſters appointed a Meeting for the *Wedneſday*. At that Meeting ſome new Intelligence was given of the favourable Diſpoſition of Government; with the Hope that my Lords the Biſhops might not oppoſe them, and with the Offer of a Perſon in high Station to bring in their Bill by Way of Motion, which can be done at any Time of the Seſſion. This Intelligence was ſtated in ſuch a Manner, as to leave no Ground of Blame on thoſe who gave it, nor any Imputation of Failure of Promiſe in thoſe to whom it related. But it was ſuch Intelligence, as prudent Men would juſtly Act upon, in a Matter of this Nature.

And

And many of the Miniſters thought, that they ſhould be wanting in the Duty, they owed to Themſelves, to their Brethren, and to their Succeſſors, if they did not improve the preſent favourable Conjuncture. It was accordingly put to the Vote: and of Fifty preſent, all agreed, except one only, to the following Reſolutions: *That the taking off the Subſcription required of Proteſtant Diſſenting Miniſters, and the obtaining Relief for Tutors and Schoolmaſters, are very deſirable and important Objects: That Application ſhould be made to Parliament for thoſe Purpoſes: and that a Committee ſhould be choſen to manage the Affair, with Power to ſummon the general Body as they ſhould ſee Occaſion.* A Committee of Fifteen out of the three Denominations was immediately choſen. And about Twenty other Miniſters, who were not preſent at the *Wedneſday*'s Meeting, came on *Thurſday* to the Chairman, and all ſignified their Approbation of the Deſign.

FROM the Circumſtances of this Tranſaction, the Reader ſees, that none but the *London* Miniſters could have been concerned in this Application: the Suddenneſs of the Reſolution affording them no Time to inform their Brethren in the Country of the Motives to that Determination. The Diſſenting Laity are not affected by this Bill, any otherwiſe than as they wiſh well to their Miniſters.

THE whole of this Application, therefore, reſted originally with the *London* Miniſters, and with them only.

THE Liſt of allowed Miniſters of the three Denominations in and about *London*, conſiſts of Ninety Five. Seventy of theſe had declared their Opinions, with only one diſſentient Voice. In the ſubſequent Meetings, the greateſt Number of Hands, held up againſt any one Queſtion propoſed, was only Six: nor did any one of theſe at any Meeting declare the leaſt Diſapprobation of the above Vote,

Vote, except the ſingle One before mentioned, who yet attended at them all.

WHATEVER, therefore, may have been ſuggeſted to the contrary; or how hardily ſoever ſome Things may have been aſſerted, no one Meaſure has been adopted by the Body of *London* Miniſters, for theſe Fifty Years paſt, which has been undertaken and proſecuted with a more general Concurrence.

A BILL

A

# B I L L,

INTITULED

*An Act for the further Relief of His Majesty's Protestant Subjects, dissenting from the Church of* England.

WHEREAS by an Act made in the First Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, intituled, "An Act for exempting Their Majesties Protestant Subjects, dissenting from the Church of *England*, from the "Penalties of certain Laws," Persons dissenting from the Church of *England*, in holy Orders, or pretended holy Orders, or pretending to holy Orders, Preachers or Teachers of any Congregations of dissenting Protestants, are required, in Order to be entitled to certain Exemptions, Benefits, Privileges, and Advantages, to declare their Approbation of, and to subscribe the Articles of Religion mentioned in, the Statute made in the Thirteenth Year of the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, except as in the said Act, made in the First Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, is excepted: And whereas many such Persons scruple to declare their Approbation

probation of, and to ſubſcribe the ſaid Articles, not excepted as aforeſaid; for giving Eaſe to ſuch ſcrupulous Perſons in the Exerciſe of Religion,

*May it pleaſe Your MAJESTY,*

That it may be **enacted; and be it enacted** by the King's Moſt Excellent Majeſty, by and with the Advice and Conſent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this preſent Parliament aſſembled, and by the Authority of the ſame, That ſo much of the ſaid Act made in the Firſt Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, as relates to the ſaid Articles, or to any of them, ſhall be, and the ſame is hereby repealed.

**And be it further enacted** by the Authority aforeſaid, That every Perſon diſſenting from the Church of *England* in holy Orders, or pretended holy Orders, or pretending to holy Orders, and every Preacher or Teacher of any Congregation of diſſenting Proteſtants, who ſhall take the Oaths, and make and ſubſcribe the Declaration againſt Popery, required by the ſaid Act made in the Firſt Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, to be taken, made, and ſubſcribed by Proteſtant diſſenting Miniſters, and ſhall alſo make and ſubſcribe a Declaration in the Words, or to the Effect, following; *videlicet*,

*I* A B *declare, as in the Preſence of Almighty God, that I believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament contain a Revelation of the*

*the Mind and Will of God, and that I receive them as the Rule of my Faith and Practice.*

Shall be, and such Person is hereby declared to be, intitled to all the Exemptions, Benefits, Privileges, and Advantages, granted to Protestant dissenting Ministers by the said Act, made in the First Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*; and by an Act made in the Tenth Year of the Reign of Queen *Anne*, intituled, 'An Act for preserving the Protestant 'Religion, by better securing the Church of '*England* as by Law established, and for con-'firming the Toleration granted to Protestant 'Dissenters, by an Act, intituled, "An Act for "exempting Their Majesties Protestant Sub-"jects, dissenting from the Church of *England*, "from the Penalties of certain Laws, and for "supplying the Defects thereof; and for the "further securing the Protestant Succession, by "requiring the Practisers of the Law in *North* "*Britain* to take the Oaths, and subscribe the "Declaration therein mentioned;" and the Justices of the Peace, at the General Sessions of the Peace to be holden for the County or Place where any Protestant dissenting Minister shall live, are hereby required to tender and administer the said last-mentioned Declaration to such Minister, upon his offering himself to make and subscribe the same, and thereof to keep a Register; and such Minister shall not give or pay as a Fee or Reward, to any Officer or Officers belonging to the Court aforesaid, above the Sum of Sixpence for his or their Entry of such Minister's making and subscribing the said last-men-

mentioned Declaration, and taking the Oaths, and making and ſubſcribing the Declaration againſt Popery, required by the ſaid Act made in the Firſt Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, to be taken, made, and ſubſcribed by Proteſtant diſſenting Miniſters, nor above the Sum of Sixpence for any Certificate thereof, to be made out and ſigned by the Officer or Officers of the ſaid Court.

**And whereas** by an Act made in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Years of King *Charles* the Second, intituled, " An Act for the Uniformity of Public Prayers, and Adminiſtration of Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies; and for eſtabliſhing the Form of making, ordaining, and conſecrating Biſhops, Prieſts, and Deacons, in the Church of *England*," **it is enacted**, That if any Perſon who is by that Act diſabled to preach any Lecture or Sermon, ſhall, during the Time that he ſhall continue and remain ſo diſabled, preach any Sermon or Lecture, that then, for every ſuch Offence, the Perſon and Perſons ſo offending ſhall ſuffer Three Months Impriſonment in the County Gaol, without Bail or Mainprize: And by an Act made in the Fifteenth Year of the ſame Reign, intituled, " An Act for Relief of ſuch Perſons as, by Sickneſs or other Impediment, were diſabled from ſubſcribing the Declaration in the Act of Uniformity, and Explanation of Part of the ſaid Act," it is declared and enacted, That the Penalties by the ſaid Act made in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Years of the Reign of King *Charles* the Second, to be inflicted upon any

any Perſon diſabled by the ſaid laſt-mentioned Act to preach, for any Offence againſt the ſaid laſt-mentioned Act, ſhall, in like Manner, be inflicted upon every Perſon ſo offending, that is prohibited by the ſaid laſt-mentioned Act to preach.

**And whereas** no expreſs Proviſion is made in and by the ſaid Act made in the Firſt Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, for exempting any Proteſtant diſſenting Miniſters from ſuch Impriſonment; **be it enacted** by the Authority aforeſaid, That no Proteſtant diſſenting Miniſter, who ſhall qualify himſelf as aforeſaid, ſhall be liable to be impriſoned by virtue of the aforeſaid Acts made in the Reign of King *Charles* the Second, or of either of them, for preaching any Sermon or Lecture in any Congregation of Proteſtant Diſſenters: And for preventing Perſons from fraudulently qualifying themſelves as Diſſenting Miniſters, **be it further enacted** by the Authority aforeſaid, That every Perſon who ſhall offer to qualify himſelf as a diſſenting Miniſter at the General Seſſion of the Peace, ſhall, if thereunto required, produce to the Juſtices of the Peace, at the ſaid Seſſion aſſembled, a Teſtimonial, ſigned by Three or more Proteſtant diſſenting Miniſters, and ſpecifying the reſpective Places where they ſtatedly officiate, in the Words, or to the Effect following, *videlicet*;

*WE, whoſe Names are under written, being Proteſtant diſſenting Miniſters, hereby certify, That we know* A B, *and that to the beſt of our Knowledge, he is a Perſon of a good moral and chriſtian Charac-*

*Character, and that we receive and acknowledge him as a Proteſtant diſſenting Miniſter.*

Witneſs our Hands this Day of

**And be it further enacted** by the Authority aforeſaid, That no diſſenting Miniſter, who ſhall qualify himſelf as aforeſaid, nor any other Proteſtant, diſſenting from the Church of *England*, who, beſides taking the Oaths mentioned in the ſaid Act made in the firſt Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, and making and ſubſcribing the Declaration mentioned in the Statute made in the Thirtieth Year of the Reign of King *Charles* the Second, intituled, "An Act for the more effectual preſerving the King's Perſon and Government, by diſabling Papiſts from ſitting in either Houſe of Parliament," ſhall make and ſubſcribe the Declaration above ſet forth, ſhall be proſecuted in any Court whatſoever, for teaching and inſtructing Youth as a Tutor or Schoolmaſter; but every ſuch Miniſter and ſuch other Perſon ſhall have full Liberty to teach and inſtruct Youth as a Tutor or Schoolmaſter; any Law or Statute to the Contrary thereof notwithſtanding: And the Juſtices of the Peace, at the General Seſſion of the Peace to be holden for the County or Place where any Proteſtant, who not being a diſſenting Miniſter, ſhall be deſirous of making and ſubſcribing the ſaid laſt-mentioned Declaration, ſhall live, are hereby required to tender and adminiſter the ſaid laſt-mentioned Declaration to ſuch Proteſtant, upon his offering himſelf to make and ſubſcribe the ſame, and thereof to keep a Regiſter; and ſuch Proteſtant ſhall not give or pay, as a Fee or Reward

to

to any Officer or Officers belonging to the ſame Court, above the Sum of Sixpence for his or their Entry of ſuch Proteſtants making and ſubſcribing the ſaid laſt-mentioned Declaration, and taking the Oaths, and making and ſubſcribing the Declaration againſt Popery, required by the ſaid Act made in the Firſt Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, to be taken, made, and ſubſcribed by Proteſtant Diſſenters; nor above the further Sum of Sixpence for any Certificate thereof, to be made out and ſigned by the Officer or Officers of the ſaid Court.

**Provided always,** That nothing in this Act ſhall extend, or be conſtrued to extend, to the enabling any Perſon diſſenting from the Church of *England* to obtain or hold the Maſterſhip of any College or School of Royal Foundation, or of any other endowed College or School for the Education of Youth, other than ſuch as have been or hereafter may be inſtituted by, or intended for, the immediate Uſe and Benefit of Proteſtant Diſſenters.

**And whereas** it hath been doubted, whether the ſaid Act made in the Firſt Year of the Reign of King *William* and Queen *Mary* be a Publick or a Private Act; **be it declared and enacted** by the Authority aforeſaid, That the ſaid Act, and alſo this preſent Act, ſhall be adjudged, deemed, and taken to be Publick Acts, and ſhall be judicially taken Notice of as ſuch by all Judges, Juſtices, and other Perſons whomſoever, without ſpecially pleading them, or either of them.

FINIS.

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